



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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FAREWELL TO CEDAR MANOR

It was a tough decision, but with fiscal deficits and lower enrollments, St. Louis Park could not support four elementary schools. Remember the time when there were no less than eleven public elementary schools operating at the same time? Now one of the “newer” schools (at 52!) has been declared excess. A sad state of affairs for the thousands of students who have matriculated there, including its most famous students, the Coen Brothers and Senator Al Franken.

So to say goodbye to this building – this family – this polyglot of cultures and languages – the school held a community open house on May 12. The Park Historical Society was there, displaying some of the elaborate scrapbooks that the PTAs had put together for each year. The PTAs were enormous – 800 to 900 participants! We saw a lot of former teachers at our table, including our friend Pearl Heitke, who had donated her 1979-80 yearbook in time for the event. At the event we got connected with Dee Gruning from the school, who was glad to give us an almost complete set of the yearbooks and many extras. She also gave us some assorted plaques won by math teams, and a giant picture of the student body taken in 1998, which we have wrapped up for storage in the Depot for now.

The event itself went well with many speakers. Senator Franken sent a letter which was read to the audience by his fourth grade teacher. The newly-restarted school choir performed. And Leo Siegel, who was principal for 21 years, regaled the audience with myriad stories, some not all originating at Cedar Manor but amusing all the same.

The program, written by Sara Thompson, Communications Director of the School District, included a nice history of the school. Much of that material has been incorporated into our web page: <http://www.slphistory.org/history/cedarmanor.asp> The one thing an outsider learned about the school is that part of the playground was known as “the pit.”

The Historical Society has very few materials from other closed schools: Fern Hill, Oak Hill, Park Hill, Park Knoll, and Eliot. (Presumably those schools still operating are keeping their pictures safe.) If anyone knows if photo albums or yearbooks exist for those closed schools, the Historical Society would like to know where they are. Especially at class reunion time, people are very interested in what their friends looked like in the third grade!

Oh, and Mr. Siegel had a message for the boys he (almost) caught digging a grave on school grounds with the headstone that read “Here lies Old Leo.” The message is that he still has the kid’s father’s hammer that got left behind, and he’s been using it ever since! Those juvenile delinquents....

THE HEMBRE FAMILY

The following was written by Beverley M. Johnson, who has lived in St. Louis Park all her life until about three years ago. She is the daughter of Roy and Leah Johnson. Her house, at 6010 Goodrich, is still standing. Her grandfather, Alfred Johnson, had it built for he and his two sons when they were young men. Eventually her grandfather gave it to her father, so she grew up in it. She says the only thing that has been changed is the kitchen, which needed it. "The thing that has disappointed me greatly is the narrowing of the road in front of the house. It was like an avenue and we, the neighbor kids, played ball there." Here's her story. Everyone is encouraged to write a family history, no matter what length.

John Oscar (born in Red Wing, Minn.) and Augusta Bengtson (born in Malmo, Sweden) Hembre moved to St. Louis Park from Red Wing in 1895, living in what was called Oak Hill. He worked for the Monitor Drill Company, located near Louisiana Ave. and Highway 7. Their rented house in Oak Hill burned down and they lost most of their household items. They rented a couple of other homes until they bought a home at 5713 Goodrich Ave. in 1909. Their property consisted of three lots; their home was on one lot and the other two were for their two cows. They also raised chickens, and had a vegetable garden. John Oscar started his own business, the J.O. Hembre Automobile and Coach Painting Co. at 19th and Lyndale.

The house on Goodrich Ave. was a two story frame house with seven rooms: kitchen, pantry, dining room, living room, a smaller room off the kitchen, three bedrooms on the second floor but no bathroom. There was a porch on the front of the house, and an unfinished room on the back of the house, called a summer kitchen. There was a cellar under a portion of the house, under the kitchen and part of the dining room. The house was heated by a coal stove or coal heater in the dining room. There were grills in the dining room and kitchen ceilings to allow heat to the bedrooms. (It was fun for the grandchildren to listen in through the grates to the adult conversations.) A furnace was not installed until around 1922. Electricity was installed shortly before that time. Prior to that, kerosene lamps were used. There was no inside plumbing, but later running water was installed so there was a sink in the kitchen and a toilet in the basement. It had a cistern with a pump in the kitchen which brought water to the kitchen, and a pail under the sink caught the discharged water. This water was used for washing dishes and clothes. A well in the back yard provided water for drinking and cooking. In the summer time, before they had an iceman, butter and milk were put in a pail and lowered into the cistern to keep them cool.

John Oscar and Augusta (usually called "Mommie" by family and neighbors) had eight children. One child, a son, died within 18 months of his birth. The others were Anna Florine (married to Roy Sewall, one-time mayor of St. Louis Park); Etta Irene (Herbert Tate); Gertrude Genevieve (Jack Webster); Olea (Leah) Frances (Roy R. Johnson, who filled an unexpired term as treasurer of SLP – Beverley's parents); Sara Dorothea (Howard J. Williams, son of Joe Williams, first fire chief of SLP); Grace Myrtle (Albert Downing {divorced}); Harry Everett (Myrtle Strandberg), fondly known around St. Louis Park as "Huck Hembre;" and Alberta Marguerite (Russell {Jim} Heller, who worked for the SLP street department). Three of the daughters, Anna, Etta, and Leah, attended Normal School and became teachers. They, the Hembre siblings, and most of their children grew up in St. Louis Park, being good citizens and making a mark on their community.

Ben Brown notes that Huck Hembre, a coremaker for Moline, lived at 5713 Goodrich and was an early pilot. Huck was a big promoter of the yearly events at Jimmy Lentz's Driving Range (Excelsior and Dakota), and gave many a brave Parkite a thrill in the cockpit of his "Flying Jennie."

THIS 'N' THAT

DEPOT IMPROVEMENTS: The City has made it a priority to make the baggage doors on the Historic Depot operational again. This will take place some time this summer. New playground equipment with a train motif has also been installed in Jorvig Park.

GIGANTIC FLAG: After years and years of digging around in the Depot we are still finding something new. This time it was a box with an enormous American flag – fully twice as big as the baggage room. It was made of a linen-like material, and has 46 stars on it. Research shows that the U.S. had 46 states between 1907 and 1912 – can this flag be 100 years old? If anyone knows anything about this fantastic artifact, please let us know. We will have to investigate how to properly store the flag (whose white stripes have turned to gray) so it will last perhaps another 100 years.

PARKTACULAR: Again this year we participated in the Parktacular Share Fair, which was a great success. We helped people find their blocks on a large map from 1931 that showed the old street names before they were changed in 1933. Color-coded push pins showed a pattern of postwar houses in the northwest sector of the city, and prewar houses south of Excelsior Blvd.

MIRACLE MILE TOUR: At the request of the Preservation Initiative of Minnesota, the St. Louis Park Historical Society presented a history of the Miracle Mile Shopping Center on April 17. The presentation was made at the AAA building, with the “tour” of the Center following. We discussed the unique history of St. Louis Park as an industrial town in the late 19th century, and the tremendous growth it experienced after World War II. Miracle Mile was built in 1951 as an alternative to shopping downtown, and its first stores were predominantly run by couples or families. There were many clothing stores and stores that catered to children – the ever-present boomer generation. Adding to the presentation were the insights of Carolyn Charles, whose father owned the Juvenile Shoe Store. Carolyn and her brother described the hard work that vendors put into their stores, working 10 hour days, six days a week. When stores began to be open on Sundays, small businesspeople couldn’t afford to hire the extra help and the small local businesses began to move away. During the tour, we took the participants down the “Mile” and listed the various businesses that had operated out of the storefronts. John McHugh at the City’s Community TV station has plans to make the presentation into a program that can be seen on cable TV.

COLONIAL INN: In April, Trustee Jeanne Andersen and Member Terri Siderakos made a trip to Orono to see a house that was the original Colonial Inn building. The Colonial Inn was a well-known restaurant on Excelsior Blvd. from 1924 to 1959. The building was moved in 1962 and transformed into a residence. Its current owner, Keith Vandenbranden, saw our web site and contacted Terri, who is the “keeper of the flame” of Colonial Inn history and we jumped at his invitation to see the building. Terri said the house was still recognizable as the restaurant, especially the ladies and men’s rooms, which still had original pink and brown tile. The restaurant was run by L.N. and Clara Smith, and Mr. Vandenbranden had also made contact with their son-in-law, David Chatelaine, who shared pictures of the restaurant and one of the ornate Faberge-like eggs that he created as a hobby. The Colonial Inn was a mainstay in St. Louis Park history and it was good to see that the building is in good hands!

HAPPY ENDING: Remember that item in the last Re-Echo where Mark Olson donated items he found in his home while undergoing renovation that had belonged to Pearl Malmstrom Alexander. We asked that if anyone was in touch with her sons Gary, Michael, or David, please let us know. Well, David’s wife saw the blurb, and they are now reunited with the items, which included Pearl’s Park High diploma, a love letter from her husband about to sail to the south Pacific during WWII, and pictures of her kids. David’s wife said that the three boys lost both parents when they were in their 20s, so it was very special to find these items.

CLASS REUNIONS: The Historical Society is making an effort to compile a list of high school reunions. Look for the link on our home page, www.slphistory.org and please send along any information you have for inclusion.

MORE THIS 'N' THAT

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

CROSBIE HOUSE TOUR: This is short notice, but on **August 1**, Winnie and Scott Crosbie will be holding an open house at their 100-year-old home at 4349 Brookside Ave. The event is from 1 to 4 pm and is open to the public. The Crosbies put a fabulous addition onto the house when they bought it and filled it with amazing antiques. The event is free to SLPHS members. To see a picture of the house, go to <http://www.jeanneandersen.net/timeline.html>

COOPER THEATER CELEBRATION: An event is being planned at the new Cooper Irish Pub in the West End to celebrate its namesake, the Cooper Theater. The event will be on **August 8, 2010** (The Cooper Theater opened August 8, 1962) from 3-6pm. Free Appetizers/Purchase Your Own Beverages. R.S.V.P. to HillaryL@carairishpubs.com or nscheur@mac.com The Cooper Theater was a very special venue that showed films shot in Cinerama. It was razed in 1992 to make way for an Olive Garden; a construction firm now sits on the site. For more information on the Cooper see <http://www.slphistory.org/history/coopertheater.asp>

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS LIVE: Back for a second year, the Wolfe Park Amphitheater welcomes members of the band that backed songs on Bob Dylan's seminal album, "Blood on the Tracks." Also scheduled to appear are many many locally- and nationally-known musicians such as Peter Ostroushko, Billy and Patty Peterson, and St. Louis Park native Dan Israel. The free concert is on **August 21** at 7 pm. The place was packed last year, so come early to claim your seat!

ICE CREAM SOCIAL: Join the St. Louis Park Historical Society at Jorvig Park for its annual Ice Cream Social. Visitors can tour the Historic Milwaukee Road Depot, send and receive telegraph messages, and see a model train in action. Sparky the Fire Dog and McGruff the Crime Dog have been invited. Police and fire vehicles will be available for demonstrations, as well as an antique car or two. Old fashioned ice cream cones and lemonade donated by Byerly's will be sold to support future Historical Society events. **Saturday, Sept. 18, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.** Jorvig Park, 6100 W. 37th St.

BROWN FAMILY: Patricia Watson (Rendle) is interested to know if anyone knows of the Lola and Monroe Brown family. Carol Brown was their oldest daughter; she was married to a local fireman Gene (Patricia doesn't remember their last name). Darlene Brown was another daughter. Patricia says "the Brown family had a foster home in St Louis Park and were an amazing family. It may be a stretch, but I would like to contact anyone that knows them or any relationship to them."

RECIPIES: This is getting to be a regular column in the Re-Echo! Kathleen Soltis wants the recipe for Lincoln Del's fantastic apple strudel: "I've never found one to rival it!" And Gail Lofdahl has offered to make a \$100 donation if we can find the Lincoln Del's recipe for its "fantastic oven-baked puffy omelets." Who has the Lincoln Del's archives, anyone know?

DOOR-TO-BUSINESS-DOOR: This summer we will be hitting the pavement to try to collect the histories of current businesses. We will focus on businesses on Excelsior Blvd., Skunk Hollow, and Wayzata Blvd. to start. We will be delivering letters asking for information that we can post to our web site and/or put on file. This will also give local businesses the opportunity to become members, buy copies of "Something in the Water," and get on the mailing list for the Re-Echo.

SLPHS GOLF SHIRTS AVAILABLE: We have just received shipment of our new SLP Historical Society golf shirts! They are light blue, with our web site on the front and our Depot logo elegantly embroidered on the back. The perfect gift for yourself or for a history-minded Oriole. To order, send a check for \$35 to 3700 Monterey Drive, SLP 55416 and specify your size.

DONATIONS RECEIVED

Mark Toretzky donated pictures, buttons, newspapers, and a Park High mini-megaphone. Mark is interested in the Westwood Shopping Center and the other businesses at the corner of Cedar Lake Road and Louisiana and we say "Have at it!"

Becky Kemling of Ottertail, Minnesota found a postcard that SLP Olympic skater Ken Bartholomew had sent from the Olympics in Switzerland – to telephone operators in Bloomington! Ken is one Park's finest athletes, so we are delighted to get it.

Jean Zimmerman at the city's new Municipal

Service Center gave us a very large map of the city from 1987.

Larry Tegantvoort sent us a magazine with an article he had written about the narrow gauge railroad system that Republic Creosoting used to transport railroad ties from boxcars to the treatment building. Where others had failed, Larry managed to get permission to take pictures of the plant in the 1960s and '70s, and he has sent us many of those pictures for our archives. The Creosote plant was stinky and polluting, sure, but it employed St. Louis Park residents for 55 years, and we feel it is an important part of our history, so thanks, Larry!

CENTURY HOUSE PLAQUES AND TOURS: The Society has chosen to recognize Century Houses in the Park through a plaque program. Residents who own houses that are at least 100 years old can fill out an application to receive a plaque. Applications are available on our web site (www.slphistory.org). To date five applications have been accepted into the program which asks owners to contribute \$100 of the cost of the plaque and the Society will pay the rest. The designation does not protect the home in any way or create any restrictions with regard to remodeling, etc. As a way to highlight the more than 100 Century Houses in the Park, the Society has identified three neighborhoods that have a number of Century Houses: Elmwood, Oak Hill South, and Brookside. A guided walking tour has been developed in the Elmwood Neighborhood to draw attention to these houses. Tours of the Oak Hill South and Brookside neighborhoods will be created as well. We expect the first tours to be this fall. If you are interested in taking the tour of the Elmwood Neighborhood let us know.

Sue Ainsworth

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: At our last Board meeting, David Grabitske from the Minnesota Historical Society walked us through the process we would take to create a Comprehensive Plan for the Historical Society. A Comprehensive Plan will help focus the direction the Society would like to go as well as addresses what steps need to be taken over the next year, five years, or ten years to achieve our long term goals. Some needs the board has identified are a possible alternative to Lenox Community Center that would include more flexible office, exhibit and storage space with better hours of access; the development of regular programming; and the development of the Milwaukee Road Depot as a focused Railroad Museum. These are not decisions the Board makes alone. Community resident and Society member input is needed. If this is something you have some experience with we would be glad for your help. We hope to create and implement the Comprehensive Plan in the next few months and look forward to the focus it will bring.

Kathy Spence Johnson, Secretary

TALE OF TWO BARNs: All this time we have been telling you that the barn at the Westling house, at Aquila Ave. and Minnetonka Blvd., was the only barn left in the Park. The bad news is that it has been taken down. But the good news is that it was not the last barn in St. Louis Park after all. City inspector Manny Camillon told us about a barn at the old Burd place, on...Burd Place! The house was built in 1922 by a Mr. Burd, and the barn still sits at the back of the property. Any other barns out there?

WESTLING BLUEPRINTS: Peter Knable, the developer of the Westling site, found many sets of blueprints in the barn and Peter donated them to the Historical Society. The blueprints were the designs for 65 surrounding homes that were built in the late 1940s and early 50s, after the Westlings decided to subdivide their large farm land. The Historical Society recently began the task of matching the blueprints, often severely damaged from their time in the barn, to their unique property.

Madison White

WHO WE ARE

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to collect, preserve, and disseminate the history of the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The archives of the Society are located in the Historic Depot in Jorvig Park (37th and Brunswick) and at the Lenox Community Center (6715 Minnetonka Blvd.). Office hours at the Lenox site are Mondays and Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment. Our mailing address is:
3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Our email address is
history@slphistory.org.

We do not have a central phone number, but you may contact a member of our Board:

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ABOUT THE RE-ECHO

The Re-Echo is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Its purpose is to share information about the City's history and the Society's activities. The Re-Echo was started by Robert C. Reiss. The name was inspired by the *Echo* newspaper, which has been published by and for the students of St. Louis Park High School since 1917.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue of the Re-Echo is a little late due to summer vacation schedules. We hope to be back on track in September. We've had so many projects come through our email that we sure could use some more active members. The age range of our typical is 16 to 87, so anyone would fit in!

JOIN US!

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and is wholly dependent on membership dues and donations for its operating costs, including the cost of mailing the Re-Echo. You don't have to be a member to receive the Re-Echo, but we need new members, especially active ones. Meetings are at 7pm on the first Tuesday of the month, and are open to all. They are held at Lenox Community Center October-May and at the Historic Depot June-September.
